



Belgian archaeologists abroad: from antiquarians to interdisciplinary research

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European Archaeology Abroad

Global Settings, Comparative Perspectives

edited by:

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1.3 BELGIAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS ABROAD: FROM ANTIQUARIANS TO INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

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Abstract

Belgian archaeological research abroad dates back to the late nineteenth century. However, until the 1930s, research projects outside Belgium were undertaken only very sporadically. This changed when the Royal Museums for Art and History (RMAH) started large excavation programmes in Syria and Egypt. The period after World War II witnessed a growth in investigations abroad largely due to the increasing research by universities.

Furthermore, Belgian research itself followed the global trend of increasing scientific interdisciplinary cooperation in archaeological research. At present, Belgian institutes also integrate the broader socio-cultural context of archaeological heritage research through an extensive collaboration with local stakeholders, which can assist in a number of areas such as the development of local educational programmes or sustainable heritage management practices.

Résumé

Archéologues Belges à l'Étranger : d'Antiquaires à une recherche Interdisciplinaire

Les premières recherches archéologiques belges à l'étranger datent de la fin du XI-Xème siècle. Pourtant, jusque dans les années 1930, des projets de recherches en dehors de la Belgique, étaient entrepris mais de façon sporadique. Ceci a changé

lorsque le Musée Royal d'Art et d'Histoire (Royal Museum for Art and History, RMAH) a entamé de vastes programmes de fouilles en Syrie et en Égypte. La période qui a suivi la deuxième guerre mondiale a connu une croissance des recherches à l'étranger, principalement en raison d'une augmentation des recherches universitaires.

De plus, les recherches belges ont suivi la tendance mondiale d'une croissance de la coopération interdisciplinaire dans la recherche archéologique. Aujourd'hui, les instituts belges intègrent un contexte socio-culturel plus large dans leurs recherches archéologiques et historiques, par une collaboration intensive avec des parties prenantes au niveau local, ce qui peut aider dans différents domaines, comme le développement de programmes locaux d'enseignement ou d'une gestion durable du patrimoine culturel.

Extracto

Los Arqueólogos belgas en el Extranjero: de Anticuarios a Investigación Interdisciplinaria

La investigación arqueológica belga en el extranjero data de fines del siglo diecinueve. Sin embargo, hasta los años treinta del siglo pasado muy raramente se emprendían proyectos de investigación fuera de Bélgica. Esto cambió cuando El Museo Real de Arte e Historia (RMAH) emprendió amplios programas de excavaciones en Siria y Egipto. El periodo después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial muestra un crecimiento de investigaciones en el extranjero, predominantemente debido al aumento de las investigaciones en las universidades.

Por lo demás, las investigaciones belgas mismas han seguido la tendencia global de la creciente colaboración interdisciplinaria científica en la investigación arqueológica. Actualmente las instituciones belgas también integran el amplio marco socio-cultural de la investigación del patrimonio arqueológico a través de una colaboración extensiva con los interesados locales. Estos pueden asistir en cierto número de campos, como el desarrollo de programas educativos locales o de las prácticas sostenibles de la gestión del patrimonio.

صخلم

تاصصختل ؤددعتم ثو حبل اىل ا راثأل نم : ج راخل ا يف ني كي ج لبل ا راثأل اامل ع

*** تاران ا كي رو ** ستيل پ تور ، * ستيل پ نايتري خ

ا كي ج لب ، تن يغ ؤ عم ا ج *

ةيل امشلا ادنل ري ا ، كريتسل و ا ؤ عم ا ج ، ؤئيل بل ا مول ع قسردم **

ا كي ج لب ، ؤي كنم فل ا ثارتل ؤل اكو ***

عساتل ا نرقل ا رخا و اىل ا ج راخل ا يف ؤي كي ج لبل ا ؤيرثأل ا ثا حبال ا خيرات دوعي
نرقل ا تاينى ثال اى تح ، ا كي ج لب ج راخ ا ثا حبال ا عيراشم تن ا ك ، ك ل ذ عم و . رش ع
يكلمل ا فحتمل ا ا ب ا مدن ع ك ل ذ ري غت دق و . عطقتم لكشب متت ، نيرش عل ا

قربت الفل تدهش دقو . رصم و ايروس يف ةعساو بيقنت جمارب خيراتلاو نونفلل
، ري بك دح ىلإ ، عجري ةيملعلا تاتعبل يف او من ةيناثلا ةيملعلا برحلا دعب ام
تاعماجل يف ثاحبال ةدايز ىلإ

يملعلا هاجتالا ةعباتم وحن الكي جلب يف ثاحبال تهجتا دقف ، كلذ ىل ع قوالعو
موقت ، نأل او . ةيرثال ثاحبال يف تاصصختلا ددعت يملعلا نواعتلا ةدايزل
ثارتلا ثاحبال عسوالا يف اقثلا يعامتجالا قايسل جمذب ةيكي جلبلا دهاعمل
نأ نكمي ام ، نييل حمل ةحلصلما باحصأ عم قاطنلا عساو نواعت لالخم نم يرثال
تاسرامم وأ ةيلحمل ةيملعتلا جماربل ريوطت لثم تالاجمل نم ددع يف دعاسي
ثارتلل ةمدتسلما ةرادلا

Keywords

Belgium, Belgian Archaeology, antiquarianism, interdisciplinary collaboration

Introduction

The history of domestic and foreign Belgian¹ archaeology is relatively unknown and has never been studied in a thorough and concise manner. Although some studies focus on the history of research for a certain archaeological period, topic, or region (*e.g.* Mekhitarian 1985; Maret 1990; De Mulder 2011), none provides a complete and integrated overview of the evolution of Belgian archaeology as a discipline. Such a study is imperative for Belgian archaeology but will not be a straightforward task, as it will involve a vast period of archival work to unravel the financial, cultural and academic trends underlying this evolution.

When focusing on the Belgian archaeological undertakings abroad, most information is scattered and only available through 'grey literature'. As such, this paper starts by providing an introductory insight into the history of archaeological research abroad and the different 'players' that participated in this research. Subsequently, it will explore the changing research mentality and agenda of projects based on some illustrative research initiatives, dealing for instance with the motives of research and the engagement with other stakeholders.

Because the term 'archaeological research' has a broad meaning, the definition of 'Belgian archaeological research abroad' in this paper will be limited to all archaeological activities that involve a direct contact with archaeological monuments and sites (*e.g.* excavation, survey, petrography, geo-archaeology and site management). Furthermore, research is considered to be 'Belgian' when a Belgian institution (*i.e.* a university, museum, private or governmental institution)

1 The kingdom of Belgium became independent after a revolt against the Netherlands in 1830. Since its existence, Belgium has undergone a series of culturally and economically driven governmental changes. The unitary Belgian state of 1830 has since evolved into a federal state with three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and three communities (Flemish, French and German), each with their own jurisdictions and governments. The communities govern matters such as language and culture (*i.e.* education, sports, media and welfare), while the regions have power over more territorial affairs (*e.g.* spatial planning).

has a significant role in the research. Research conducted by a Belgian citizen employed by or working for a non-Belgian institution is therefore not included.

The first Belgian ‘archaeologists’ were rich, highly educated people (such as doctors, noblemen, clergymen and teachers) acting out of personal interest, and their research had a limited academic or professional motive. The first real step towards the professionalization of archaeology was made in the late nineteenth century when archaeologist Baron A. de Loë was employed by the Royal Museum for Armour, Antiquities and Ethnology (RMAAE), the current Royal Museums for Art and History (RMAH). De Loë introduced new techniques to his research, which resulted in an increased attention for recording and a noticeable progress in research quality. In 1903 he also founded the National Service for Excavations, which was funded by the Belgian government (Cahen-Delhay 1999: 106; De Mulder 2011: 56-57). After World War II the Government Service for Excavations, the successor of the National Service for Excavations, became integrated into the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (*Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium / Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique*, KIK/IRPA). From 1963 onwards, this service became an independent excavation service, and in 1989 this service split into a Flemish and Walloon excavation service.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the attention for archaeology at the universities also evolved out of a growing interest in history, geology (*such as* the excavation of the famous Neandertal caves of Wallonia) and art history. It was not until after World War II that archaeology became taught as an independent discipline.

As for Flanders, all archaeological research takes place within a Malta-related context since 2005–2006. Archaeological contractors are nowadays the main executors of archaeological research; universities have become increasingly less active in the field (De Clercq *et al.* 2011) and recent reforms have steered those government agencies responsible for archaeology towards a policy-supporting role.

Actors involved in archaeology abroad

In Belgium, there has never been a central governmental organization in charge of the supervision, execution or funding of archaeological research abroad. In general, there are two main categories of actors involved in archaeological research abroad, which we will briefly discuss in this section. The first category consists of scientific organizations, such as universities, museums and scientific academies (also called schools) that undertake or support archaeological research abroad. The second category comprises agencies and foundations that subsidize this research.

Universities

There are five Flemish universities and three Walloon academies.² Three of the five Flemish universities and all three Walloon academies have an archaeology department and have been active abroad since the late 1940s.

The Catholic University of Leuven, founded in 1425, is the oldest Belgian university. Their first excavation abroad took place in the late 1940s in Alba Fucens, Italy (Mertens 1981), by F. De Visscher (professor and then head of the *Academia Belgica*). Subsequently, the university was involved in a long list of excavation programmes, mainly focusing on the Classical world and the Near East. In 1968 the university split up into a Flemish university based in Leuven (*Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, KUL), and a Walloon university (*Université Catholique de Louvain*, UCL), which moved to a new campus in Louvain-La-Neuve.³ After this separation, each university went its own way but remained specialized in the same archaeological research areas (see figure 1). Nowadays, the KUL is active in Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Greece and Turkey (Vermeersch 2002; Bretschneider and Van Lerberghe 2008; Waelkens 2009), and the UCL is active in Greece, Egypt and Italy (MacGillivray *et al.* 1984; Belova and Krol 2004; Cavalieri *et al.* 2007). The UCL also has a branch in Namur, as part of the *Académie Universitaire de Louvain*, which has been active in Ostia, Italy since 1992 (De Ruyt 1995).

Ghent University was founded in 1817. The first 'scientific' international archaeological project took place in 1951 in Fars, Iran, under the direction of L. Vanden Berghe (Overlaet 2007). Subsequently, there have been annual expeditions to Greece, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, Spain and Iran.⁴ At present, the university has major projects in Italy (Vermeulen 2009), Portugal (Taelman *et al.* 2008) and Siberia (Gheyle 2009).

The University of Liège (ULG - part of *Académie Universitaire Wallonie-Europe*), was established in 1817 and is one of the first Belgian universities that specialized in archaeology, owing its long archaeological tradition to the early Palaeolithic excavations in the caves of the Meuse basin. Nowadays, archaeologists at ULG are still primarily active in Belgium. During the last 25 years however, several important excavations of Palaeolithic sites have also been undertaken by ULG scholars in Iran, Turkey, Romania, Moldavia, Morocco, Lebanon, China, and Egypt (Otte, pers. comm.).⁵

2 Since the reforms of 2007, the Walloon universities have been grouped into three academies (Académies), as a consequence of the revised subsidy policy of the Walloon government. See also 'Programmes de recherches à l'étranger'. Retrieved 21 January 2010 from <http://dev.ulb.ac.be/crea/AccueilFrancais.php?page=Etranger>.

3 For more information about the parting of the Catholic University of Leuven see Jonckheere and Todts (1979).

4 See 'Vakgroep Archeologie - Onderzoeksprojecten' on the website of the University of Ghent. Retrieved 21 December 2011 from <http://www.archaeology.ugent.be/onderzoeksprojecten>.

5 See 'Fouilles' on the website of the University of Liège. Retrieved 19 December 2011 from <http://www2.ulg.ac.be/prehist/fouilles/fouilles.html>.



Figure 1. Overview of the projects of the different Belgian institutions mentioned in this chapter, illustrating the focus on the Mediterranean and the Near East (Illustration: Flanders Heritage Agency).

The Free University of Brussels was founded in 1834 and underwent the same reform as the University of Leuven. In 1969 the university split into the Walloon ULB (*Université Libre de Bruxelles* – part of *Académie Universitaire Wallonie-Bruxelles*) and the Flemish VUB (*Vrije Universiteit Brussel*).⁶ Both universities have an archaeology department. Whilst the Walloon ULB has an extensive archaeology programme and has been very active abroad in the Classical world, the Near East, Africa and recently also in Latin-America (ULB 2010), the Flemish VUB archaeology department is considerably smaller with less research abroad. The foreign activities of the VUB are grouped in the Mediterranean Archaeological Research Institute (MARI), focusing in particular on the Bronze and Iron Age of Cyprus and the Near East.⁷

Museums

Five museums have a history of carrying out archaeological research abroad: the RMAH, KIK/IRPA, the Royal Museum of Mariemont, the Royal Museum for Central Africa and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. The archaeological research programmes of the Royal Museum of Mariemont, and KIK/IRPA and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences are however small-scale (Van Loo and Bruwier 2010; Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, pers. comm.), and will not be discussed in this paper.

Out of all these museums, the Royal Museum for Art and History (RMAH) is the most actively engaged in archaeological projects abroad. It was founded in 1835 and, since 1905, has partaken in many projects in Egypt, Syria, Easter Island, Italy, Greece, Vietnam, Mexico, Russia, Jordan, Poland, Portugal, Mongolia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Bolivia and Peru (Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis 1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004). An important aspect of the museum's policy is public outreach and as a consequence, many of the scientific publications are aimed at a wide audience.

The Museum of Belgian Congo⁸ (MBC) was established following the Brussels International Exhibition of 1897 and was initially aimed at obtaining the Belgian people's support for King Leopold II's practices in his 'private' colony of the Congo Free State. Leopold II later turned over this personal property to Belgium, mainly due to international outrage over the brutality of his reign, and annexation by the government of Belgium was accomplished in 1908. After the independence of Congo, the MBC was redefined as the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), widening the geographic scope in which its activities were to take place. Through time, the archaeology department evolved into an important scientific entity within the museum, specifically dedicated to the prehistory of central Africa (Maret 1990:

6 See 'Historiek en basis filosofie' on the website of Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Retrieved 19 January 2010 from <http://www.vub.ac.be/home/historiek.html>.

7 See also the website of the Mediterranean Archaeological Research Institute (MARI) at <http://www.vub.ac.be/mari/>.

8 For further reading about the activities and current strategies of the RMCA, see Cornelissen, this volume.

134). It is presently still active in Africa (Cornelissen, this volume), with as its main scientific goal the reconstruction of Africa's Sub-Saharan history through the study of material culture and the environment.⁹

Belgian scientific schools abroad

In total there are three Belgian schools with an archaeology department abroad (see also Braemer, this volume): the *Academia Belgica in Rome*, the Belgian School at Athens and the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. All have a supporting role for research that takes place in that specific country.

The *Academia Belgica* was inaugurated in 1939 in Rome. Since its existence it has supported Belgian historians, linguists, artists and archaeologists who study the Italian culture. It has been an important agent in supporting excavations in Italy in Castro, Alba Fucens, Artena and Herdonia (Academia Belgica 1989).

The Belgian School in Athens was founded by Belgian members of the French School at Athens in 1962. Its original aim was to supervise excavations in Greece that were conducted by Belgian universities. Currently, it supports research in Sissi, Ténos and Torikos.¹⁰

The Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) is an academic centre which helps scholars and students from the supporting Dutch and Flemish research centres (museums and universities) with their activities in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies, Egyptology, archaeology and papyrology. Most recently, it has supported Belgian research in Egypt in Elkab, Qurta, El Hosh and Deir El-Basha.¹¹

Funding institutions

The majority of the above mentioned scientific organizations have their own research budget, which is granted by the communities. However, this is often insufficient for the full scope of activities, and additional financial support is needed. There are many private and governmental institutions in Belgium which subsidise or support research and a full list is beyond the remit of this paper. However, the most important providers of additional funds are the Walloon and Flemish communities through the National Fund for Scientific Research (*Le Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique*, FNRS or *Nationaal Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*, N-FWO).

The FNRS/N-FWO was founded in 1928 after a speech by King Albert I in 1927 in which he pleaded for more attention to science and innovation.¹² Since its beginnings, the FNRS/N-FWO has had one main goal, which is to (financially) support and stimulate scientific research. Initially it was privately funded, but since 1948 the Belgian state has become the main investor. In 1992 the FNRS/N-FWO split into the Flemish FWO (*Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vlaanderen*)

9 See the website of the RMCA or *Koninklijk Museum voor Midden Afrika* in Tervuren at <http://www.africamuseum.be/home>.

10 See the website of the Belgian School at Athens at <http://www.ebsa.info/>.

11 See the website of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo at <http://www.institutes.leiden.edu/nvic/>.

12 See also the website of the FWO, *Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* at <http://www.fwo.be/>.

and the Walloon FRS (*Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique*) allowing each linguistic group to define its own science policy. Nowadays, the communities are the most important funders, but a small part is still funded by private investors.¹³

One of the first major projects funded by the FNRS/N-FWO was an archaeological excavation in 1930 in Apamea, Syria (Balty 1985: 217) and a scientific mission to Easter Island (Halleux and Xhayet 2007). To date, the FNRS/N-FWO has been the most important institution in subsidizing foreign research by Belgian universities and museums through funds for research projects.

Project proposals are nowadays evaluated on the following topics: collaboration between different research units, innovativeness of the project, innovativeness of the used methodology, international scientific level of the research unit and significance of the project (both on a national and international scale).¹⁴ As for archaeology, both domestic and foreign projects get funding, however projects outside Belgium usually tend to get a more privileged review, due to the more international scope and scientific output (*i.e.* international publications).

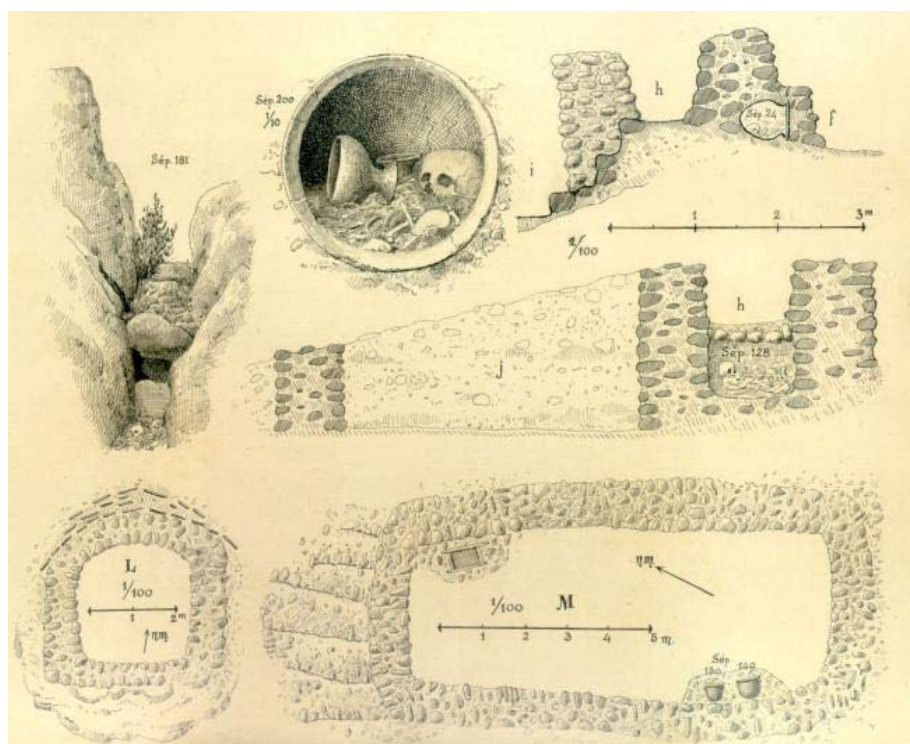


Figure 2. Drawings of some El Argar (third millenium BCE) funerary contexts, excavated by the brothers Siret in Spain. Given their background in geology, they paid considerable attention to accurate recording. (Illustration: Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis/ Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire).

¹³ See <http://www.fwo.be/>.

¹⁴ See <http://www.fwo.be/>.

An overview of Belgian archaeology abroad

1830–1940: Towards the first major excavation projects

The first Belgian archaeological activity outside Belgium was undertaken by amateurs (such as clergymen, engineers and geologists) who excavated, registered and/or collected archaeological finds during their work or travels abroad (in for example Mexico, Congo and Spain). However, due to their limited training and the scarcity of sources they left behind, it is almost impossible to trace back the scope and agenda of these first archaeological undertakings. They varied from proper archaeological work with great attention for registration and context (see figure 2; Siret and Siret 1888) to undertakings solely focusing on the acquisition of finds.

In 1905, J. Capart (archaeologist and deputy conservator of the Egyptology department of the RMAH) was granted the concession to excavate a tomb in Sakkara, Egypt. The work by Capart can be regarded as the first professional excavation abroad. In subsequent years, this pioneer excavated several other sites in Egypt (Mekhitarian 1985: 225). A general interest in the classical world (figure 3), which was also in line with the personal interest of members of the Royal Family, can be distilled in the first major excavations funded by the FNRS/N-FWO. These missions were undertaken by the RMAH and included excavation programmes in Apamea, Syria (1930) (Balty 1985: 217) and Elkab, Egypt (1937) (Mekhitarian 1985: 225) – which are both still running until today. These first professional archaeological projects, orchestrated by the national museum, mainly focused on excavating archaeologically-rich contexts such as temples or graves, and on the acquisition of antiquities. Such an interest in prestigious art pieces is also illustrated by the expedition to Easter Island (figure 4) from 1934 to 1935. Funded by the FNRS/N-FWO, a Belgian team sailed to Easter Island to acquire a *moia* statue for display in the RMAH (Forment 1985). Sadly this statue was removed without real archaeological fieldwork, which is illustrative of the object-oriented archaeology of the time.¹⁵

Next to research in the classical world, the prehistoric archaeological work in the Congo continued. Although this research was mainly performed by Belgians who were not originally trained as archaeologists, the merit of the research projects by J. Collete, F. Cabu and M. Bequaert are widely acknowledged for specifying central Africa's place in prehistory (Maret 1990).

1945–1990: Universities digging abroad

In the late 1940s a group of Belgian archaeologists started excavations in Alba Fucens, Italy, under the direction of the Academia Belgica and the University of Leuven (Mertens 1981). Ghent University, on the other hand, began a survey and excavation programme in Fars, Iran, in 1951 (Vanden Berghe 1954). These universities, where archaeology was increasingly taught as an independent

15 See 'Het mysterie van POU'. Retrieved 15 December 2011 from www.fedramagazine.be/UserFiles/Pdf/pdf165_nl.pdf.

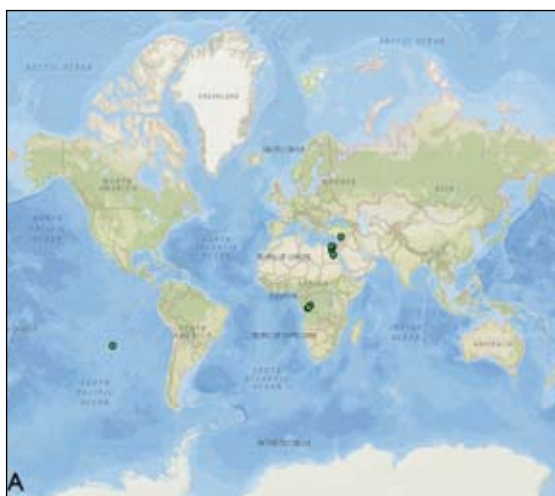


Figure 3. Distribution of research activities across different periods. A: 1830-1940; B: 1945-1990; C: 1990-2009 (Illustrations: Flanders Heritage Agency).

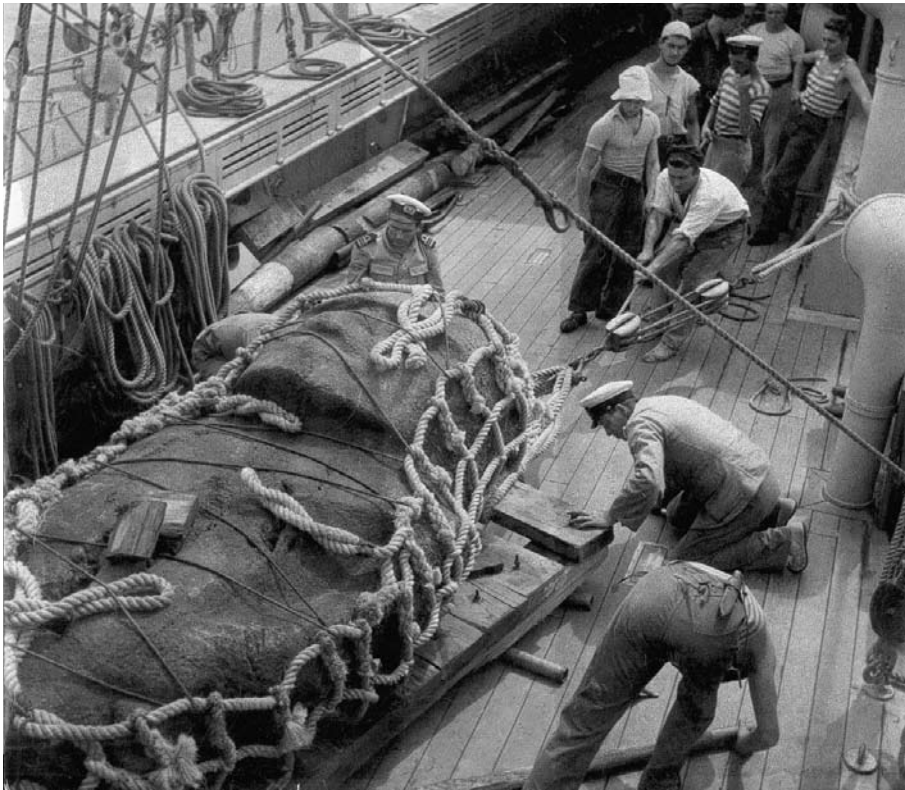


Figure 4. An Easter Island statue is loaded on board the *Mercator*. (Photo: Nederlands Fotomuseum).

discipline, were new actors who increasingly started up excavation projects which resulted in a growing number of research projects abroad and a changing research attitude. In addition, the major projects of the RMAH were restarted after World War II, and investigations in Congo continued (Maret 1990).

Since the 1950s, the more prominent role of universities in the undertaking of research abroad led to a growing multi-disciplinary approach,¹⁶ clearly breaking with the antiquarian tradition. Excavation programmes such as at Alba Fucens in Italy (Mertens 1981), Apamea in Syria (Balty 1985: 222), Pessinus in Turkey (Pessinus Excavations Project 2008), and Elkab in Egypt (Limme 1985) became for example characterized by an increasing integration of biologists, topographers, geographers and geologists into archaeological research.

16 Multi-disciplinary research involves different academic disciplines that relate to a shared goal, but with multiple disciplinary objectives. Participants exchange knowledge, but they do not aim to cross subject boundaries in order to create new integrative knowledge and theory (Tress, Tress and Fry 2004: 488).

This growing multi-disciplinary aspect subsequently evolved into interdisciplinary research¹⁷ in the 1980s. A prime example of this is the archaeometry research by the universities of Ghent and Leuven. This project was one of the earliest that determined the provenance of classical marble from the Mediterranean based on an intense collaborative study between archaeologists, chemists and geologists (Moen, De Paepe and Waelkens 1992).

The research programmes during this period were often subject to international tension caused by changing post-war political relationships. The independence of Congo in 1960 was a particularly important event which meant that archaeological research in the region was hampered by political instability. Other international conflicts affecting research by Belgians included the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt (1973) which turned the area around El Kab into a militarized zone, which meant that RMAH archaeologists started to excavate elsewhere in Egypt (Limme 1985); the Iranian Revolution of 1979 made it impossible for Ghent University archaeologists to continue their research in Luristan, West-Iran; and the first Gulf War in 1990 halted research led by L. Demeyer (Ghent University) in Iraq.

1990–Present: Community archaeology and the post-Soviet era – two new worlds for Belgian archaeology

For both new and existing research programmes, the main scope was still the Classical world. But the political developments in the Soviet Union opened up a new world for some Belgian institutes, and the number of Belgian activities in Russia and other former Soviet areas saw a remarkable increase (Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis 1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004; Gheyle 2009; Otte, pers. comm.).¹⁸

It is interesting to note that the excavation or survey programmes during this period, both in and outside Europe, have mainly been research-led projects and less frequently related to rescue and preventive work. Moreover, a significant rise in non-invasive surveys and prospective work is noticeable during this period, which can be attributed to the growing field of landscape-archaeology and new techniques like geophysics and Geographical Information Systems.

Another interesting development is the ever intensifying cross-cultural cooperation between Belgian institutions, local archaeological institutes and local stakeholders.¹⁹ Such collaborations increasingly transcend the purely functional (for example the use of infrastructure and facilities for fieldwork) and academic (such as joint research and publishing with host institutes); nowadays, research collaborations abroad increasingly take on board the educational opportunities of

17 Interdisciplinary involves several unrelated academic disciplines in a way that forces them to cross subject boundaries. The concerned disciplines integrate disciplinary knowledge in order to create new knowledge and theory and achieve a common research goal (Tress, Tress and Fry 2004: 488).

18 See also 'Fouilles' on the website of the University of Liège. Retrieved 19 December 2011 from <http://www2.ulg.ac.be/prehist/fouilles/fouilles.html>.

19 See Cornelissen, this volume, about collaborative projects in Congo.

heritage sites, community archaeology, the development of a local framework for heritage tourism, capacity building at governmental and university levels, as well as the intangible values of archaeology. Examples of such collaborative, indigenous and community projects are commonly found in non-Western contexts and vary from collaborations where a local museum is constructed,²⁰ to projects where local children of Easter Island are taught the history of their island (Vlaams Instituut voor het Onroerend Erfgoed 2009) and to initiatives where local communities are assisted with the development of a framework for sustainable heritage tourism (Sagalassos 2011).²¹

The results of excavations or surveys can also be implemented into local heritage management structures. This is one of the objectives of the Altai project (in Siberia) by Ghent University. Specifically, the aim of the research is to develop and maintain sustainable heritage management solutions for some of the ethno-natural parks in the Altai Mountains. Such heritage management approaches are community-based, starting from a careful assessment of the perception of cultural heritage by local indigenous populations. The Altaians for example perceive the numerous burials sites as spiritual charged places; disrespect for these monuments is not tolerated which has already led to culturally charged disputes with archaeologists. This means that an integration of socio-cultural and economic needs of the indigenous population within archaeological conduct is imperative. In addition, the possibilities and restrictions of sustainable heritage tourism are implemented into the management plan, which again are mainly based on indigenous values and the vulnerability of the archaeological heritage (Plets *et al.* 2011).

Conclusion

In this brief history of Belgian archaeological research abroad, several types of players have been distilled that are active abroad, and each has had its own influence on the 'way' in which archaeology was performed. The museums, which initiated the professionalization of archaeology in Belgium, were also the first Belgian non-amateurs that started up professional excavation projects abroad, which had much to do with prestige and the acquisition of antiquities. The universities subsequently moved the more object-oriented approach towards a more multi-disciplinary and eventually inter-disciplinary archaeology, with still a focus on the classical world. This traditional scope of Belgian archaeology abroad was however remarkably widened with the disappearance of the Iron Curtain. A final, less-pronounced trend is the recent attention to and active involvement of the indigenous population.

As mentioned in the introduction, Belgian archaeology – both outside and inside Belgium – lacks a thorough reflection of its own history. This paper should as such be considered as a starting point for future research on Belgian archaeology

20 See also the 2005 speech in English in the section on the Pessinus Excavations Project on the website of *Universiteit Gent* at <http://www.archaeology.ugent.be/pessinus/2005speechenglish>.

21 See also 'Planning for Sustainable Tourism in Sagalassos and Aglasun' on the website of the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project. Retrieved 16 December 2011 from http://www.sagalassos.be/en/community_archaeology/sustainable_tourism.

abroad. As a small country with a limited budget for scientific research, comparison with its neighbouring countries is thereby imperative.

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22 Up until January 2012 OE was known as the Vlaams Instituut voor het Onroerend Erfgoed (VIOE).

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